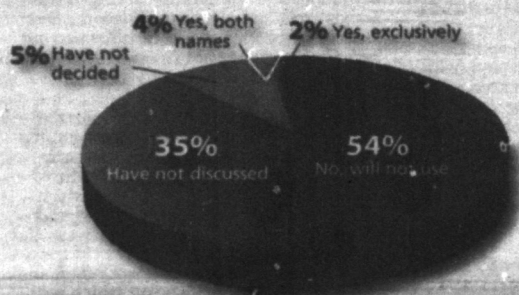


Support weak for name proposal

Lifeway Research pastor poll reveals minimal favor for add-on

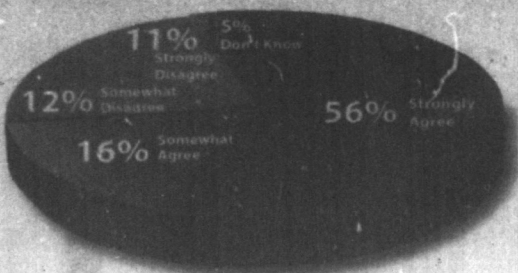
Does your church intend to use the name "Great Commission Baptists" in some or all of your communications?



"Great Commission Baptists" would be acceptable for use by those who find it beneficial



"Southern Baptist Convention" should continue to be used



Survey of 1,000 SBC pastors | Lifeway Research.com

Lifeway
RESEARCH

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) — With less than a week to go before Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) messengers vote on a proposed addition to the convention's name, greater than half of SBC pastors surveyed do not intend to use the new name, "Great Commission Baptists," in communication about their church, according to a survey by LifeWay Research.

While the survey also reveals 40% of the pastors surveyed say they have not discussed the issue or decided, more than 70% of the pastors agree the name, "Southern Baptist Convention," should continue to be used.

LifeWay Research conducted a random survey of more than 1,000 SBC pastors in light of the task force appointed by SBC President Bryant Wright to study a possible name change for the 167-year-old convention.

The report of the task force, delivered in February during the president's report to the SBC Executive Committee, recommended the convention maintain its legal name but adopt Great Commission Baptists as an informal, non-legal name for churches and entities that want to use it. The Executive Committee approved the president's recommendation, and SBC messengers will consider the recommendation during the annual meeting in New Orleans June 19-20. The LifeWay data was released June 8.

LifeWay Research asked the question: "Do you agree that the Southern Baptist Convention should continue to be the name for this convention?" and found 72% of pastors agree (strongly or somewhat) the name should continue to be used. Twenty-three percent disagree and five percent responded, "don't know."

The percentage of pastors who agree with the statement increases with age. Sixty-one percent of pastors under 45 years of age agree, while 82% of pastors over 65 years of age agree. Pastors of smaller churches (under 50 in attendance) are most likely to strongly agree (64%) with the retention of the name, Southern Baptist Convention.

Pastors in the West (45%) are less likely to strongly agree than pastors in the South (57%).

Jimmy Draper, chairman of the task force that made the

recommendation, told Baptist Press the "survey is about what I expected."

The vast majority of Southern Baptists prefer to keep the Southern Baptist name," Draper told Baptist Press. "In our study we concluded that there were many reasons why we should keep the Southern Baptist name. That is why we recommended keeping that name. Approximately 90% of those who attend the convention annually are from the south. For most of us, we see the value of the name as a brand worthy of maintaining."

Draper said the task force made the Great Commission Baptists add-on recommendation to benefit those outside the South, as well as ethnic groups.

"It is important for all of us to remember that we are now ministering as Southern Baptists in all 50 states," Draper said. "For many of them the name, 'Southern,' is an impediment to gaining opportunities to seek to bring others to faith in Christ. For many of our African American church leaders in the SBC, their involvement with the name, 'Southern,' has been a point of contention and conflict with their peers. We should believe in the Great Commission enough to be willing to remove every possible impediment to evangelistic outreach for those for whom it would be helpful."

Scott McConnell, director of LifeWay Research, said that "while more than one in five pastors indicate they are ready for a change in the name of the convention, across all subgroups measured the majority of pastors agree the current name should continue to be used."

When pastors were asked if they agree "the non-legal name like 'Great Commission Baptists' would be acceptable for use by those who would find it beneficial?" an equal number of pastors agree and disagree (46%) with the statement.

Responses to this question also vary by church size and pastor age. Only 36% of pastors of churches with less than 50 in attendance agree the non-legal name would be acceptable compared to 61% of pastors of churches with attendance over 250.

There is also a split in responses between younger and older pastors about the new name. The majority of pastors age 18-44 agree (59%), while the majority of pastors age 65-plus disagree (60%).

Pastors also were asked if their church intends to use the tagline, Great Commission Baptists, in some or all of their communication about the church. More than half (54%) say they will not use the non-legal moniker although more than a third (35%) have not discussed it, and five percent have not decided.

Four percent responded they will use both Southern Baptist Convention and Great Commission Baptists in their descriptors, and two percent indicated they will use Great Commission Baptists exclusively in their church identification.

Pastors in the West are more likely than those in the South to select, "Yes, we will use it exclusively." Eight percent of those in the West compared to one percent of those in the South gave this response.

Draper said the percentage of churches possibly open to the descriptor is about what he envisioned.

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From the editor

WILLIAM PERKINS

An Internet power grab

Ever heard of the International Telecommunications Union (ITU)? Neither had I, but this obscure United Nations agency is poised to wrest control of the Internet from its U.S. handlers and impose the kind of strict controls on the flow of digital information that the nations involved such as China, Russia, Saudi Arabia, and Iran have dreamed about for years.

Given the hostility to Christianity openly displayed by many of the players in this political power play, the success of such a move would have dire consequences on Christians' ability to spread the Gospel by utilizing the Internet.

According to an article written by Bob Sullivan for The Red Tape Chronicles on MSNBC.com, "A group of nations led by China, Russia and several Middle Eastern countries would love to see the end of U.S. dominance over the operational control of the Internet, and these nations think they have found their vehicle for accomplishing that: A U.N. body called the International Telecommunications Union."

"The organization, which manages international telephony agreements, will meet in Dubai in December and attempt to extend its charter to take operational control of the Internet away from the U.S.-dominated nonprofit International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, or ICANN. ...Some technology experts say the Dubai meeting could very well decide the direction of the world's most valuable resource — information — for the rest of the 21st century: The future of Internet anonymity, free speech, and perhaps freedom itself could be at stake."

The Internet has brought many advances, along with more than a few challenges and bad things, too. One of the most positive aspects of the worldwide embrace of the Internet is the ability of Christians to spread the Gospel to places that have previously been physically unreachable, due to the restrictions put in place by countries that fear our passion for winning lost souls to Jesus (Matt. 28:18-20).

It is much easier to deny a visa, or turn around missionaries at the border, or reject a shipment of Bibles, than it is to shut down access to the Internet. The totalitarian governments at the head of the ITU's move to strip Internet control from the U.S. have been some of the worst offenders in the area of religious freedom, and they have had only limited success within their countries in controlling Internet access to religious material.

That must really gall them, so they've set upon the ITU as a way to ensure total control of the Internet within their borders.

Federal Communications Commissioner Robert McDowell wrote a commentary in the Feb. 21 issue of The Wall Street Journal that sounded the alarm about the ITU takeover attempt and stated, "Regulation proponents only need to secure a simple majority of the 193 member states to codify their radical and counterproductive agenda. Unlike the U.N. Security Council, no country can wield a veto in ITU proceedings. With this in mind, some estimate that approximately 90 countries could be supporting intergovernmental Net regulation — a mere seven short of a majority."

"While precious time ticks away, the U.S. has not named a leader for the treaty negotiation. We must awake from our slumber and engage before it is too late. Not only do these developments have the potential to affect the daily lives of all Americans, they also threaten freedom and prosperity across the globe."

Satan's ultimate goal, of course, is to see each of us separated from God and damned to eternal misery with him in Hell. The Internet must have developed into a really important tool for preventing that, because the evil one is once again trying hard to destroy our worldwide witness, this time when we use the Internet to spread the Good News.

We already know how all this will turn out, but in the meantime there are oceans to cross, souls to win, and battles like this to be fought. Are we up to the challenge? Are you up to the challenge? Time will tell.

How New Testament came to be

Suppose that you became a Christian in the second century A.D. You've heard the story of a divine being who died on a cross and rose from the dead. Through baptism, you've openly identified yourself with His followers.

Now you want to learn more about this deity, yet you quickly realize that some people who call themselves, "Christians," understand Jesus very differently from the Christians in your congregation. In fact, one nearby group that claims the name Christian also says that Jesus wasn't actually a human being — he was a spirit that only seemed human!

How would you decide who was right?

As a 21st century Christian, the most reasonable reply seems to be, "Read your New Testament!" The problem is, most Christians in the second century couldn't read. Even if you were one of the privileged few who possessed the capacity to read and write, you wouldn't personally own a Bible.

Your only "Bible" would have been found in an armarium, a specially-constructed cabinet with niched shelves for scrolls and codices that stayed in the house where your congregation most often gathered. The armarium would likely have sheltered a copy of the Greek Old Testament and perhaps a couple dozen other sacred scrolls or codices.

It's possible that not all of these texts would have been identical to the 27 books that you find in New Testaments today. To be sure, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, Paul's letters, and probably John's first letter would have had a place in the armarium, but the cabinet could lack a few writings that your New Testament includes: the letter to the Hebrews and maybe Peter's second epistle, for example, or a couple of John's letters.

A quirky allegory entitled The Shepherd might have made an appearance in your armarium. You might even find a letter or two from a Roman pastor named Clement.

Do you sense the dilemma that faced first- and second-century Christians? How did they maintain a clear and consistent faith in the shadow of so many competing claims, and who decided on the texts that we call the New Testament today?

The question isn't whether God had any part in choosing the books. The question is, "By what human means did these texts come to be viewed as authoritative?"

Conspiracy theorists and skeptical scholars claim that no definite set of texts existed



Guest opinion
with Timothy Paul
Jones

until the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. Agnostic professor Bart Ehrman claims:

We are able to pinpoint the first time that any Christian of record listed the twenty-seven books of our New Testament as the books of the New Testament — neither more nor fewer. Surprising as it may seem, this Christian was writing in the second half of the fourth century, nearly three hundred years after the books of the New Testament had themselves been written. The author was the powerful bishop of Alexandria named Athanasius. In the year 367 A.D., Athanasius wrote his annual pastoral letter to the Egyptian churches under his jurisdiction, and in it he included advice concerning which books should be read as Scripture in the churches. He lists our twenty-seven books, excluding all others. This is the first surviving instance of anyone affirming our set of books as the New Testament. And even Athanasius did not settle the matter.

Unfortunately, this summary spins the facts and leaves readers with several impressions that aren't quite accurate — impressions such as until the late fourth century, there was no consensus at all about which Christian writings were authoritative, and that the church's standard even then was the word of a powerful bishop.

What's the complete story? When and how did Christians agree on which writings were authoritative in their congregations, and was there any standard for these discussions beyond the decree of a respected leader?

The primary standard for deciding which books were authoritative emerged long before the fourth century, and this standard was not the word of a powerful bishop. Hints of this standard can, in fact, be found in first-century Christian writings.

Long before Athanasius was even born, testimony that could be connected to eyewitness

see JONES on p. 4

THE Baptist Record

Editor
William H. Perkins Jr.
wperkins@mbch.org

Associate Editor
Tony Martin
tmartin@mbch.org

Layout/Design
Rebekah Ray
rray@mbch.org

Advertising
Emily Jones
ejones@mbch.org

Circulation Manager
Branda Quattlebaum
bquattlebaum@mbch.org

Editor Emeritus
Don McGregor

Baptist Record Advisory Committee:
Dwanna Parker, Flora Paul Sims, Pontotoc
Barry Burns, Terry Carl White, Meridian
Billie Buckley, Petal
Russell Mord, Sturgis

Postmaster:
Send changes of address to: The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Send news, communication, and address changes to: The Editor, Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530.

Tel: (601) 968-3800
Fax: (601) 292-3330
E-mail: baptistrecord@mbch.org



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Seminary acquires 1617 King James Bible

Original printing arrives at NOBTS from Tennessee

NEW ORLEANS (BP) — In 2011, Christians celebrated the 400th anniversary of the first printing of the King James "Authorized Version" of the Bible.

The KJV, heralded both for its long-standing value as a translation of Scripture and for its impact on the English language, was commissioned in 1604. Seven years later, in 1611, royal printer Robert Barker produced the first copies of the new English version of the Bible.

A second printing took place in 1613, with a third printing in 1617.

New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) acquired a copy of the King James Bible from the 1617 printing from a former Primitive Baptist minister and his family in Atwood, Tenn., in August 2011.

The past year of the Bible's history is meaningful for the family and quite exciting for the seminary, which hopes to display it one day in a museum dedicated to Bible history and biblical archaeology.

Most of the story of this particular Bible remains somewhat of a mystery. It was printed in Barker's own London print shop. Due to high demand for the Bible, later printings were done at several London printers and bound at Barker's shop.

Judging from the Bible's size — 15.5 inches tall by 11.5 inches wide by 5.25 inches deep — it was probably used as a lectern Bible or in some other ministry setting.

Little else is known about the Bible's history for almost 250 years after its publication. In 1860, according to an inscription near the front, it was presented to Anne Early as "the gift of her beloved father," Edward Early, on Oct. 24 of that year. No occasion is named for the gift.

Members of the Early family lived both in England and the United States in the mid-1800s, so it's possible the Bible had crossed the Atlantic by then.

Another century-long gap in the Bible's story sits between the inscription and the 1970s when it reemerged in Atwood, Tenn. Samuel Thomas Tolley, a Primitive Baptist minister, bought another Primitive Baptist pastor's library, which included the 1617 King James Bible.

"[The previous owner] had been collecting Baptist literature for years and years," said Mike Tolley, Samuel Tolley's son. "He was getting old, and my dad bought his whole library. We don't know what he gave for it."

Neither Mike Tolley nor his sister remembers the previous owner's name or where he acquired the Bible. The 1617 King James Bible, he said, became a treasured part of his father's library.

During his 50-plus years in ministry among Primitive Baptists, Samuel Tolley published a Baptist newspaper and worked toward building a historical library for Primitive Baptists. His personal collection, besides the 1617 King James Bible, included scores of Primitive Baptist books, records, and other documents.

"He devoted his whole life to publishing his newspaper and building his library," Mike Tolley said.

In the 1990s, Samuel Tolley began to sell his personal library, Mike Tolley said, in hopes that it would benefit Baptists for generations to come. "It all wound up in the [Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives] in Nashville," Mike Tolley said. "They got just about everything from Dad's library."

Everything, that is, except the 1617 King James Bible, which Samuel Tolley had promised to give to his son and daughter, Ellen Lovett. The Bible passed to Mike Tolley and his sister about five years ago when Samuel Tolley developed Alzheimer's disease and retired from the pastorate.

By the spring of 2011, Mike Tolley and Lovett decided to sell the Bible, not just to raise extra funds but also to allow other Christians to study and learn from it. That's where New Orleans Seminary comes into the story.

Around May 2011, Mike Tolley offered to show the Bible to his interim pastor, Joey Gowan, a former NOBTS student.

Gowan said when he saw the Bible and learned that Tolley and Lovett were interested in selling it, he knew just who to contact.

"At that very moment, Dr. Harsch's name came to mind," Gowan said, referring to church history professor Lloyd Harsch. "I went home and emailed Dr. Harsch right away."

Harsch recalls that email well. "He said, 'I had you for Baptist Heritage in 2007, and I remember you talking about all the great books we have in our library. I'm an interim pastor here in Atwood, Tenn., and there's a member of our church who has some old books, including a third edition of the King James Bible,'" Harsch recounted.

Within weeks, Harsch was in touch with Gowan, then Tolley. He received permission in the summer to negotiate a purchase price. In August 2011, the seminary formally acquired the Bible and arranged for it to be stored at the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Nashville. The Bible was brought back to New Orleans the following month.

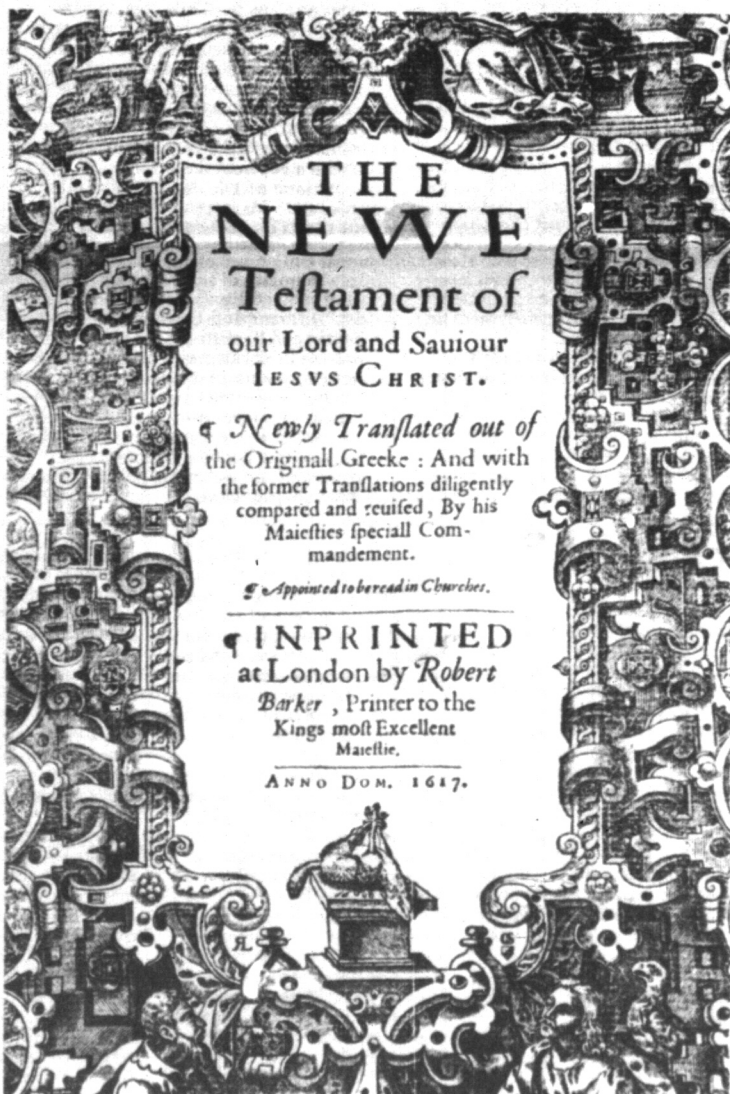
The seminary was able to purchase the book thanks to a private donation from Tom Messer Jr. and his wife Carol. Messer's parents, Mary Wheeler Messer and the late Thomas Messer Sr., both NOBTS graduates, have been longtime seminary donors. The purchase price was not announced.

Mike Tolley said he was extremely pleased for the Bible to go to New Orleans Seminary. "I didn't want it to be in a private collection," he said. "I wanted it to be in a historical place. For my dad's memory, I'd rather it be in a library where people will have access to it and learn from it, and not in a private collection."

Harsch said, "We're really grateful to Mike and Ellen and their willingness to make this available to us. It's a great addition to our library for research, particularly with the H. Milton Haggard Center for New Testament Textual Studies. It greatly enhances the ability of our students to do research and understand how God has provided the Bible for us."



HISTORIC TEXT — This 1617 edition of the King James Bible is an original from just the third printing of the book.



More and more, some Baptists seem to be drawn toward looking to and listening to Calvinism. As in centuries gone by, some feel it is the right direction and others would be better served to steer clear of the teaching. Today this teaching is referred to as Reformed Theology or another term to avoid being labeled as a Calvinist. It might be good if John the Baptist looked at John Calvin. Now, I am fully aware that Baptist churches did not come from John the Baptist, but from the fact that we baptize people and that became the mark of our denomination.

More than a play on words is the fact that one John named the Baptist and the other named Calvin do not seem to have the same theology. Some Baptist congregations are unaware that what they are hearing from the pulpit is the interpretation of Scripture as understood and expounded on by John Calvin. Still as they listen it sounds rather biblical, often authoritative, and from time to time a little bit different from anything that they have heard before. As they listen they begin to ask questions, and in their search for understanding they may run into John Calvin.

Who is this man John Calvin and why do you hear people embracing his views so emphatically? John Calvin was born just over 400 years ago and as an adult, he was both a gifted thinker and an effective communicator. He is best known for developing a view of Scripture and doctrine that was summed up in what is generally referred to as the TULIP. The TULIP was an acronym with each letter standing for a cardinal doctrine of Calvin's. Just for understanding, this is what it looked like and what it represented.

T — Total Depravity — Every part of man is affected by sin, people are unable to do anything to save themselves, and their entire nature is controlled by evil.

U — Unconditional Election — This is Calvin's view that teaches that God has chosen from eternity those who He would bring to Himself. Those chosen receive salvation through Christ and those not chosen receive wrath against them for their sins against God.

L — Limited Atonement — Sometimes this is referred to as particular atonement or salvation. It is the teaching of Calvin that Jesus' death was not for everyone but was limited only to those who would be elected and ultimately saved. You might think of this in terms of limited atonement and



John the Baptist Looks at John Calvin

general atonement meaning He died for the sins of the entire world.

I — Irresistible Grace — This doctrine is the teaching that when God determines He is going to save you, ultimately His grace will overcome any and all resistance to obeying the call of the Gospel.

P — Perseverance of the Saints — It is a teaching that if you are saved and set apart for God and His use, you will persevere in the faith. Those who are not persevering are probably not a part of the elect.

In Calvin's day and following, those who adhered most radically to these points were generally a part of the Presbyterian Church. While John Calvin contributed much to theological thought and discussion, his system was certainly not infallible. While it has been a point of discussion for 350 years, there are various groups that have followed a different shape and form of biblical interpretation while Presbyterians and Calvinists in general have followed these tenets. At times I have been asked, "Are you a five point Calvinist?" My response has been and will always be, "No, I am a Baptist." Their response would be, "No, I am not talking about that. I am talking about theology." To which I would again respond, "That is what I am talking about and I am a Baptist." I am not anti-Calvinist, but I am pro-Baptist and Baptists are not in the main walking in lockstep with the TULIP. Do we believe some of the things that Calvin taught? Absolutely! Not because we are Calvinists, but because we are Bible believers. But there are some things that Calvin believed that Baptists do not generally agree with and we tend to hold a different view, a Baptist view.

Some would lean toward thinking that historically Baptists have always been a part of reformed theological thinking or Calvinist approach, and that has not been true. And for the most part, it is not true today. Since this is not a place or space for a theology book, let me just point to several areas where Baptists historically collide with Calvin.

Limited Atonement — When Jesus died there was just enough power and enough bloodshed for the elect and not for the whole world. For the average Baptist, a simple recitation in their mind or with their lips of John 3:16 announces that something is not quite in sync here. "God loved the world so much that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Who are all these people? Well, whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. We believe in the main in a general atonement, that when we preach the Gospel anyone who hears and responds in faith to God's gift of life can be saved by Jesus.

Another point of difference is the indescribable mysteries of election or, as most of the time they want to talk about, predestination. I am certainly aware that God knows everything, but does God choose some people for salvation and some for damnation? If when your child is born is that a fixed foregone conclusion and there is nothing whatsoever that can be done about that? Week to week we hold up the wonder of Jesus Christ who can save anyone with the understanding that God does what Jesus declared that He would do when He said in John 12:32 "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will

draw all men unto me." Does everyone respond? No, but many do and they become a part of the wonder of God's redemptive plan as they put their faith in a Jesus who died for them.

But more significant than either of these issues are two issues that I see in Baptist churches when Calvinism becomes the centerpiece of theological thought. **There is sometimes a sense of superiority that develops along with a disdain for anyone who does not agree with their five point view.** Now friends, may we all be warned that whatever our view of theological thought, if it causes us to develop this attitude, we can quickly become terribly unchristian toward those who are not superior like we are. God deliver all of us.

A second significant thing is that there seems to often be a deceptive-ness among some of those who would declare their position a reformed theology. Followers of five point Calvinism are often resistant to even tell that is what they believe. One pastor who followed Calvinism was in a Baptist church and actually told that he was instructed not to tell that he was a Calvinist because people would not listen to him. Well that becomes an integrity issue and not a doctrinal issue. If Baptists want to lean toward Calvinism, that is their prerogative. But if they find in Scripture that they ought to lean away from it or just remain Baptist that too is their spiritual prerogative.

While over 300 years ago John Calvin added greatly to the discussion and wealth of theological thought, John Calvin never, ever saved one person. It is of utmost importance in our discussions about our view of theology not to be the centerpiece or overshadow in any way the fact that Jesus Christ is the only One whoever did, does, or ever will save anyone. How God goes about engineering that in the human heart is a discussion that maybe we can have in a future millennium and ask James or John, Peter or Paul how all of that takes place. Finally, John the Baptist might be shocked at what has been done to his amazingly simplistic message. As he introduced Jesus to the world he said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world," (John 1:29) and it has been enlarged to a huge volume of instruction that is almost mind boggling!

The author can be contacted at jfutral@mbcb.org.

JONES

cont. from p. 2

nesses of the risen Lord was uniquely authoritative among early Christians. Even while the New Testament books were being written in the first century A.D., the words of people who had actually seen Jesus — especially the words and writings of the apostles — carried special authority in the churches (see Acts 1:21-26; 15:6-16:5; 1 Corinthians 4-5; 9:1-12; Galatians 1:1-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:26-27).

After the apostles' deaths, Christians continued to value the testimony of eyewitnesses and their associates. In the first decade of the second century, Papias of Hierapolis put it this way:

I did not... take pleasure in those who spoke much,

but in those who... recited the commandments given by the Lord. ...So, if anyone who had served the elders came, I asked about their sayings in detail — what Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip or Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's followers.

About the same time, a church leader named Polycarp cited the words of the Apostle Paul as "Scripture."

A generation later, when someone in the Roman church wondered which Christian writings should be considered authoritative, this emphasis on the eyewitnesses persisted. After listing the books that he viewed as authoritative, here's what one Christian leader wrote regarding a popular book known as The Shepherd that was circulating in the churches:

Hermas composed The Shepherd quite recently — in our times, in the city of Rome, while his brother Pius the overseer served as overseer of the city of Rome. So, while it should indeed be read, it cannot be read publicly for the people of the church — it is counted neither among the prophets (for their number has been completed) nor among the apostles (for it is after their time).

Notice carefully this second-century writer's reasons for not allowing The Shepherd of Hermas to serve as an authoritative text in the churches. This writing could not be added to the Old Testament prophets because the time of the Hebrew prophets had passed ("their number has been completed"), and with the deaths of the apostles the time of the apostolic eyewitnesses had also ended ("it is after their time").

This teacher didn't forbid believers to read The Shepherd. He simply pointed out that the book should not serve as an authoritative text for Christian congregations ("it cannot be read publicly for the people of the church").

Later church leaders such as Tertullian of Carthage and Serapion of Antioch echoed these sorts of standards, with Serapion clearly stating, "We, brothers and sisters, receive Peter and the rest of the apostles as we would receive Christ himself. But those writings that are falsely ascribed with their names, we carefully reject, knowing that no such writings have ever been handed down to us."

Again, Christians rooted their standard for determining which writings were authoritative in the testimony of eyewitnesses.

From the first century onward, Christians viewed testimony that could be con-

nected to eyewitnesses of Jesus as uniquely authoritative. The logic of this standard was simple. The people most likely to know the truth about Jesus were either eyewitnesses who had encountered Jesus personally or close associates of these witnesses.

Although Christians wrangled for some time about the authority of certain writings, it was something far greater than political machinations that drove these decisions. Their goal was to determine which books could be clearly connected to eyewitnesses of Jesus.

Jones is associate professor of leadership and church ministry at Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. This column first appeared at timothycauljones.com, and appears here courtesy of Baptist Press. Jones may be contacted at tjones@sbs.edu.

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH



DEADLY BLAST — Rubble is strewn about in the aftermath of a Nigerian suicide bombing that happened June 3 outside two churches. There were reports of at least 21 dead, with some caused by Nigerian Army shootings after the bombing. (BP photo courtesy of Compass Direct)

Bombings, follow-up shootings in Nigeria aimed at Christians

BAUCHI, Nigeria (BP) — Local sources claim Nigerian soldiers were responsible for at least eight of 21 deaths after a suicide bombing of two churches on June 3, according to a Compass Direct News June 7 report. Many of those injured from the blast and alleged military shooting have been in critical condition, Compass noted.

A statement reportedly from the Muslim extremist sect Boko Haram claimed responsibility for the suicide bombing of the Living Faith church on the outskirts of the northern Nigerian city of Bauchi. The blast also collapsed a wall of the nearby Harvest Field Church of Christ.

Of 61 people taken to Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University Teaching Hospital Bauchi after the blast, 38 were in critical condition, a staff member told Compass on condition of anonymity. The other 23 have been treated and sent home. Church leaders said at a June 4 news conference that 45 Christians were considered injured.

The military shot eight Christians to death, said Lawi Pokti, chairman of the Bauchi chapter of the Christian Association of Nigeria. Twenty-five were injured by the bomb blast, "while 20 sustained various degrees of injuries from the gunshots by soldiers," Pokti said.

The Nigerian military has yet to respond to the allegations, Compass reported. In similar church attacks in Nigeria, Christians angry that their brethren were being killed in the presence of security agencies have been shot for refusing military orders to leave.

Lamenting that Christians have been attacked and killed without provocation, Pokti nevertheless beseeched Christians to refrain from seeking revenge.

"We also wish to call on all Christians to remain calm and not to embark on any act of reprisal or vengeance, as this will constitute a criminal act and a violation of the teaching of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ," Pokti said.

Johnson Elogva, associate pastor at Living Faith, said most of the injuries were severe.

"Most of our members are critically ill in the hospitals," he said. "Some with first-degree, second-degree burns."

Elogva said many of the church's 2,000 members were traumatized but that the battle belonged to the Lord. "Like the Lord told Jehoshaphat not to go out and fight, so we too believe that the Lord will fight for us," Elogva said.

The pastor had completed the first worship service at 9:15 a.m. and had begun the second service when the congregation heard a loud blast that shook the sanctuary, Elogva recounted.

"The glass windows were shattered, the roof of the church building was shaking and almost collapsing on us," he said. "Our church members were scattered, and they were running and jumping through all available entrances out of the sanctuary. There was smoke and fire all over outside."

Mbami Godiya, pastor of nearby Harvest Field Church of Christ, said 10 members of the congregation were injured — three critically — when the blast collapsed a wall of the church building.

Godiya said he saw two cars being screened at the security point in front of the church compound, the second one containing the suicide bomber. Then he turned his attention away from them.

"Suddenly, there was a loud bang which brought part of my church building down," Godiya said. "Our church became very dark as fire engulfed it. In the midst of this darkness and the cries from the members of my church, I shouted and called for calm, and asking them to lie down in case there were multiple explosions."

The pastor said he saw the hand of God in that no one from his congregation died. "Ten of my members who were injured were taken to the hospital," Godiya said. "Seven were treated and discharged, and three are still in critical condition."

Reported by Compass Direct News, www.compassdirect.org, a news service based in Santa Ana, Ca., focusing on Christians worldwide who are persecuted for their faith. Used by permission.

Christians' life sentences in Egypt raise concern of other believers in country

CAIRO, Egypt (BP) — An Egyptian judge has sentenced 12 Coptic Christians to life in prison for their alleged part in a riot that left two Muslims and one Christian dead in the village of Abu-Qurgas. Eight Muslims charged with the same crimes in the same riot were acquitted.

In the lead-up to Egypt's first presidential election, the ruling has added to fears that justice will continue to elude the country's Christian minority. A second, lesser-known ruling, however, may be a cause for hope. The life sentences against the 12 Coptic defendants, on May 21, shocked even Copts accustomed to one-sided legal judgments.

The ruling came against the backdrop of what is being touted as Egypt's first democratic presidential election. After the first round of voting May 23-24, unofficial results show the Muslim Brotherhood's Mohammed Mursi in the lead, with former Prime Minister Ahmed Shafiq close behind. Mursi and Shafiq will face each other in a June 16-17 run-off.

The riot in Abu-Qurgas occurred on April 18 of last year. A wealthy Coptic Christian lawyer, Alaa' Rushdy, had placed a speed bump in front of his home, and a minibus driver angered by it got into an altercation with security guards at Rushdy's home.

Many of the particulars about the ensuing riot cannot be confirmed, but multiple Egyptian news outlets reported that guards at Rushdy's home or others at his house armed themselves at the sight of a gathering Muslim throng and began shooting in order to prevent an attack on their village.

The reports agreed that Muslims then swept over Abu-Qurgas, leaving dozens of Coptic homes and businesses in ashes. There were no reports of any damage to Muslim-owned homes. Two Muslim men and one elderly Christian woman were killed.

Another 20 men — 12 Christians and eight Muslims — were arrested and charged with multiple crimes including murder, disturbing the peace, inciting "sectarian strife," arson, and possession of unlicensed firearms.

All the Coptic Christian defendants were found guilty and sentenced to life in prison, while none of the Muslim defendants was convicted.

Athanasios Williams, a Coptic Christian human rights lawyer and a leader in the Egyptian Social Democratic Party, said the trial was unjust but there is "a history of unfair trials against the Christians when Muslims attack them."

Meanwhile, a rare verdict in the case of a Muslim who killed

a Christian held out a ray of hope for Copts. On May 14 an Egyptian court led by Chancellor Mahmoud Salama upheld a death sentence against Amir Ashour Abd al Zaher, a police officer who, in 2011, boarded a train, attacked a group of Christians, and shot one dead.

Samia Sidhom, managing editor of Watani newspaper in Cairo, said the ruling went against an unwritten rule that judges cannot give the death penalty to a Muslim who kills a Christian. "It is very rare. For many of us, the ruling came as a good surprise," she said. "Most of us expected he would be declared mentally deranged."

The attack occurred on the afternoon of Jan. 11, 2011, when Al Zaher, 29, a police officer posted in the province of Minya, boarded train number 979, began shouting, "God is great," and opened fire on six Coptic Christians with a service pistol, according to witnesses.

Al Zaher killed Fathy Mousaad, in his 70s, with a shot to the chest. He turned the pistol on five others, wounding Mousaad's wife, Emily Hanna Tadaly, 61; Sabah Shenoda Soliman, 52; Marian Nabil Zaki, 25; Magy Nabil Zaki, 26; and Ehab Ashraf Kamal, 30. The survivors were taken to the Christian-operated Al Ray Al Saleh Hospital, treated and released. All those shot were Copts.

In court, Al Zaher claimed that he wanted to sit in an empty seat next to Mousaad's daughter, and when Mousaad refused to let him, the two got into an argument ending with the Muslim pulling out his pistol and opening fire.

Al Zaher's defense also made some effort to portray him as being mentally ill, with his wife testifying to support the claim.

On March 12 a judge in Upper Egypt sentenced Al Zaher to death, a sentence that had to be approved by Egypt's Grand Mufti, a state appointed Muslim leader. No execution date has been set.

Williams, the human rights attorney, said regardless of who wins the Egyptian presidential election, he is "expecting the worst in all cases."

Morsi's Freedom and Justice Party is connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. Shafiq, the former prime minister, is an independent candidate who at one time was a member of the Mubarak administration.

"If the Islamists take over, we will be like Iran, and they will enforce sharia law, and there will be no freedom of religion," Williams said. "There will be no freedoms of any kind. There will be no freedom in art, opinion or anything."

"If Shafiq takes over, it will be the same way it was before."

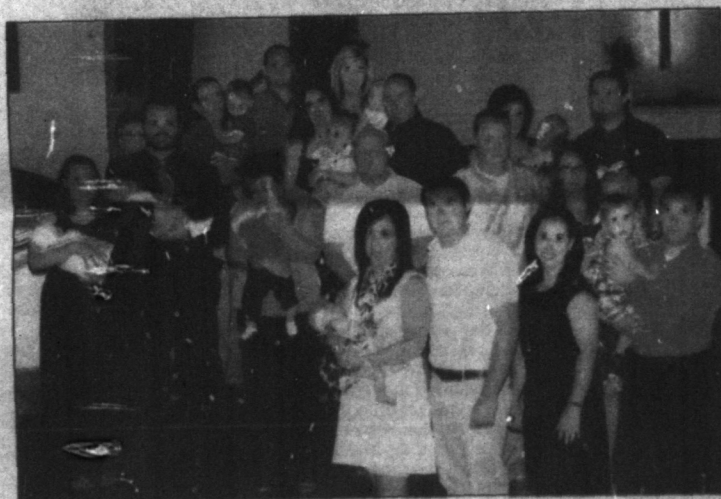
Just for the Record



The youth of **NESHOBA CHURCH, UNION**, have used Wednesdays as their ministry and mission days. The group has taken diapers to the crisis pregnancy center, worked with the Neshoba Baptist Center, Neshoba General Hospital, painted bird feeders and flower pots for shut-ins, and will be helping with Crossover during the Southern Baptist Convention in New Orleans and the church's VBS. Shown are the participants.



HARMONY CHURCH, TIPPAAH COUNTY, GA's are shown wearing vests made by their leaders. Leaders are Mary Ann Janes, shown, and Ruth Simpson. Brian Tatum, pastor.



OAK GROVE CHURCH, SHUBUTA, baptized seven new church members in the Chickasawhay River May 20. Shown are deacon Yancy Taylor, Cody Sublette, Roger Schweppe, Deborah Schweppe, Jo Lynn Schweppe, Aaron Sublette, deacon Edwin Ivy, Richard Sublette, Laura Schweppe, and pastor Terry Irby.

AT LEFT: BIG LEVEL CHURCH, WIGGINS, held a child dedication service May 27. Shown are the participants.

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MONTH

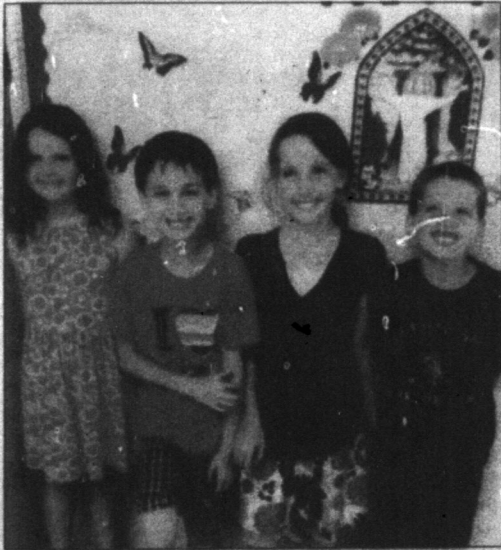
YEAR

The new **We Love Life** car tag offers another prolife way to invest in the lives of women facing an unplanned pregnancy.

The **MS Baptist Christian Action Commission** supports this new tag and asks that if you haven't already, please pledge to purchase the new **We Love Life** tag today. 300 pre-sales are needed before the tag can go in to full production.

You can order the **We Love Life** tag at www.chooselifems.org or by calling 601-206-5816.

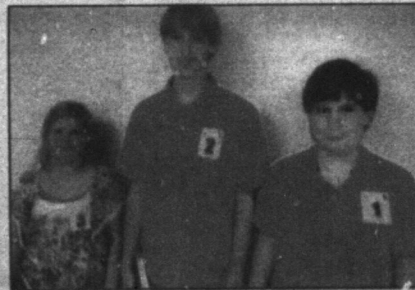
Bible Drill



LEMOYNE AVE. CHURCH, BILOXI, recognizes its Bible Buddies.



SLAYDEN CHURCH, LAMAR, recognizes its youth and adult drillers: Nic Carpenter, Blake Plowman, Caroline Loftin, Faye Sanders, and Deborah Sanders, leader.



DREW CHURCH, DREW, recognizes its youth and children's Bible drillers. **ABOVE, LEFT:** youth Nathan Barnett, Matthew Rogers, and Lane Andrews; **ABOVE, RIGHT:** children Parker Beck, Cori Barnett, Presley Beck, and Arin McIntyre.



CALVARY CHURCH, WAYNESBORO, recognizes its youth Bible drillers: Back row, Reed Wood, leaders Arthur & Paula Wood, and Madison Gandy; front row, Casey Knight, Bryce West, Melody Walker, and Erin Knight.

WALTHAM CHURCH, WALTHAM, recognizes its youth and children's Bible drillers.



Truth is not relative.

Find it in the One who is the way, truth, and life.

Simply share the following prayer with God in your own words.

1. Lord, I admit that I need you. (I have sinned.)

2. I want forgiveness for my sins and freedom from eternal death. (I repent.)

3. I believe Jesus died and rose from the grave to forgive my sins and to restore my relationship with you. (I believe in Jesus.)

4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this point on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Christ as my Savior and Lord.)

But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)

If you make a decision on Christ today, contact a local Southern Baptist church for spiritual guidance.

BIBL I O C I P H E R

PWOHN EWN NCJHUDA WA NWRWLL-

WQ; AWL NCWK VEWQUHN EWN QCON

O TOJ ROJ PLXEB AWLNC.

GLWIULPH NQUENJ-HUIUE: WEU

Clue: P = B

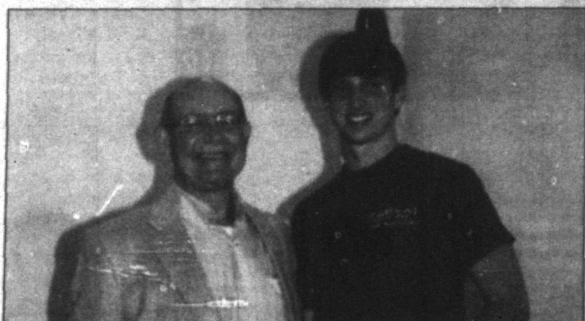
Have fun with cryptography and exercise your Bible knowledge. A King James Version Bible verse has been encoded by letter substitution. The same letter is substituted throughout the puzzle. Solve by trial and error. Answer to last week's puzzle: Psalm Sixty-nine: Five

By Charles Marx, 1932-2004, © 2005

Bible Drills



NEWHEBRON CHURCH, NEWHEBRON, recognizes its children's Bible drillers, shown, with leaders Glenda Westmoreland and Tisha Stephens.



PARKWAY CHURCH, HOUSTON, recognizes senior Will Faulkner for nine years in Bible drills.



SPRING CREEK CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, recognizes its children and youth Bible drillers and leaders.

CLASSIFIEDS

MINISTER OF YOUTH AND EDUCATION: Farley Community Church (a Southern Baptist church) in Huntsville Alabama is seeking a full-time Minister of Youth and Education. Resumes may be sent to Farley Community Church, Attn: Personnel Committee, 12302 Bell Road, Huntsville, AL 35893.

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Vacation Bible School



Upcoming Vacation Bible Schools:

➤ **Neshoba Church, Union:** June 24 - 28; Sun., 2 - 8 p.m.; Mon. - Thurs., 5 - 8 p.m.; preschool - 6th grade.

➤ **County Line Church, Overt-Whitfield Community:** Registration, June 23, 11 a.m. - 1 p.m.; June 24 - 28, 6 - 8 p.m., kindergarten - 6th grade; June 29, closing program, 6 p.m.

➤ **New Home Church, Fulton/Clay Community:** June 16, 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.

➤ **Chester Church, Ackerman:** June 25 - 29, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m., ages 3 years - 6th grade.

➤ **Eucletubba Church, Saffilo:** June 24 - 28, 6 - 8 p.m.

➤ **Mt. Carmel Church, Smith County:** June 18 - 22, 6 - 8:30 p.m.; commencement, June 24 at 6 p.m., followed by fellowship.

➤ **Holcomb Church, Holcomb:** June 25 - 29, 6 - 8 p.m.

➤ **Damascus Church, Flor:** June 18-21, 6 - 8 p.m.

ABOVE PHOTO: As part of the **MT. CARMEL CHURCH, CARTHAGE**, VBS pre-registration on June 2, a helicopter from Air Care landed in the church parking lot at 10:15 a.m. The crew talked to the children about their jobs and showed the aircraft. The church's VBS is June 18 - 22, 6 - 9 p.m.

Submission Guidelines

The Baptist Record is pleased to publish news and photographs of special events that take place in cooperating churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention.

News submitted for publication in The Baptist Record must be either (a) typewritten, (b) neatly printed on 8 1/2 by 11-inch paper, or (c) neatly printed on standardized forms provided by the newspaper. All articles must be received in writing; no articles will be accepted over the telephone.

News may be submitted electronically to the address below, and must be contained in the message segment of an e-mail form. Due to increasing virus threats, no text attachments will be accepted. Photograph attachments are permissible.

Please make articles concise. Include the who, what, when, where details of the story, along with a contact person's address and telephone number.

Photographs may be color or black and white. Instant photos and digital printouts are not reproducible. Digital photos may be used if submitted as a JPEG file via either e-mail, CD or DVD. Photos must be clear, sharp, and well-lighted. Cell phone photographs and other low resolution items are generally not publishable. Photographs can not be returned. Please do not attach photos with tape or staples.

All news items are subject to editing, and all photographs are subject to cropping. Photographs must depict people. No landscape, building, or object-only photographs will be printed. News items and/or photographs can be published one time only. News items and/or photographs depicting benefits and activities for secular or outside organizations will not be published. Deadline for submitting news is one week prior to requested publication date.

Articles that are not date-sensitive will be published on a space-available basis.

Submit news and photographs to The Baptist Record, P.O. Box 530, Jackson, MS 39205-0530. FAX: (601) 232-3330. E-mail: baptistrecord@mbcb.org.

MS POSITIONS

SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH IN NEED OF A PIANIST Sundays AM & PM & Wednesday evenings Please send resume to First Baptist Church, Attn: Personnel Committee P.O. Box 110, Morton, MS 39117

FBC KOSCIUSKO, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME CHILDREN'S MINISTER. Please mail resumes to Personnel Committee, FBC Kosciusko, P.O. Box 70, Kosciusko, MS 39090 or email them to dizure@fbcokoski.com.

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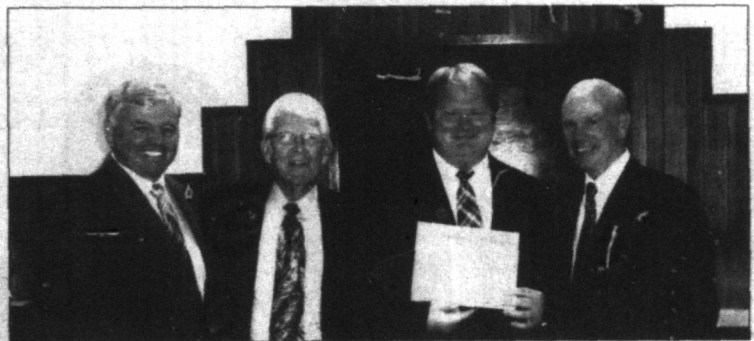
CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH OF BRAXTON, MS, IS SEARCHING FOR A MINISTER OF YOUTH. Resumes can be emailed to charlywelch@bellsouth.net or mailed to P.O. Box 111 Braxton, MS 39044. For Question please call Charly Welch @ 601-692-2179. Deadline 03-19-12.

ARLINGTON HEIGHTS BAPTIST CHURCH OF PASCAGOULA, MS IS SEEKING A FULL TIME STUDENT MINISTER. Please send Resumes to the church at 3819 Arlington St., Pascagoula, MS 39351. Attn: Search Committee or by email at arlington_church@bellsouth.net.

Just for the Record



SILVER CREEK CHURCH, PIKE COUNTY, ordained J.D. Lightell as deacon November 6, 2011. Shown are Becky Lightell, Lightell, and Jimmy Smith.



ABC'S: BEULAH CHURCH, DECATUR, ordained T.J. Bates to the gospel ministry June 3. Shown are Ricky Harrison, interim pastor Bill Webb, Bates, and Byron Howell.



FIRST CHURCH, BRUCE, recently held a GA recognition service. The group, shown, averages 35 girls per week.



AT LEFT: ROBIN-WOOD CHURCH, SAUCIER, recently ordained Rudy Torries and Greg Tisdale as deacons. Shown are Terri Torries, Torries, Tisdale, Michelle Tisdale, and pastor Terry L. Upchurch.

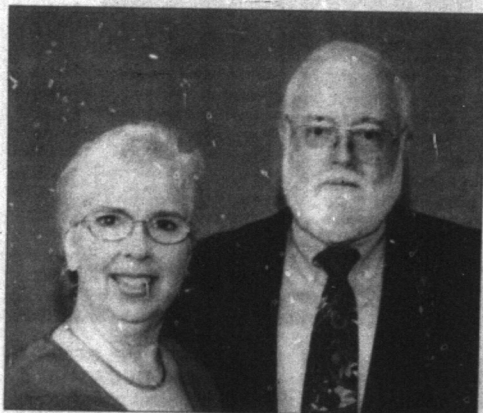


SUNRISE CHURCH, LEAKE CO., recently recognized high school graduates Madison Quick and Britt Coghlan, shown. College graduates included Leanne White, Brant McNeese, Teresa Savell, Jennifer McMillan and Connie Savell Wilkerson.

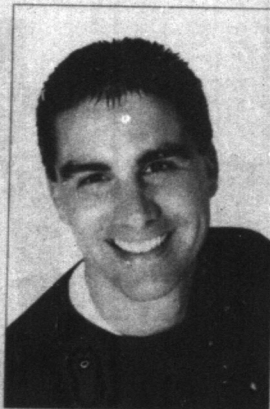


PINEVIEW CHURCH, LAUREL, held a groundbreaking for their new building June 3

Staff Changes



NOXAPATER CHURCH, NOXAPATER, has called Bill Barnes as Minister of Music & Activities. Shown are Barnes and his wife Gloria.



FIRST CHURCH, PETAL, has called Brad Eubank as pastor.



MORGAN CHAPEL CHURCH, GOLDEN TRIANGLE, has called Gary Roberson as pastor, shown with his wife, Gina. The Robersons have three children. Roberson was previously pastor of First Church, Verona.



EDWARDS CHURCH, EDWARDS, has called Jimmy Barrentine as pastor, shown with his wife, Joan.

Just for the Record



POPLAR SPRINGS CHURCH, MENDENHALL, recognized its 2012 high school graduates. Shown are Mason Fewell, Noah Bowlin, Katie Allen, Jael Lee, and Chelsea Parker.



CALVARY CHURCH, BOGUE CHITTO, recently held a baby dedication. Shown are pastor Hal Hatten, Tonya Powell, grandmother of Baylee Jean and mother Brittani Russell, Bryson with parents Andrew and Margie Montgomery, Kyler with parents Aaron and Kari Gill, and Hadley Claire with parents Alex and Casey Davis.



POPLAR FLAT CHURCH, LOUISVILLE, held a note burning May 20 noting the payoff of the church's new educational wing. Shown are several of the children participating in the note burning.

In other Church News:

► **Damascus Church, Flora**, will show the movie, *Courageous*, at 10 a.m. Coffee and donuts served prior to showing. A Bible study, *Courageous Living*, will be offered June 24 and July 1, 8, and 15 at 8:45 a.m.

► **CORRECTION**: In the May 31, 2012 edition of *The Baptist Record*, Carolyn Boyd of New Liberty Church, Morton, was incorrectly identified as Carolyn Byrd. *The Record* regrets the error.

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Revivals & Homecomings

► **Singleton Church, Winston Association**: Revival, June 17 - 20; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by lunch and 6 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Jim Porter, speaker; Patsy Moore, music; Lawrence Runnels, pastor.

► **Corinth Church, Heidelberg**: Homecoming, July 8; Sunday School, 10 a.m.; worship, 11 a.m., followed by meal; Dean Stewart, speaker.

► **Coldwater Church, Philadelphia**: Revival, June 24 - 27; Sun., 11 a.m. and 6:45 p.m.; Mon. - Wed., 7 p.m.; Curt Pace, speaker; Tim Moore, music.

STUDENT MINISTER

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The Accountability Dare • Joshua 7:1, 5-8, 10-15

We have taken the Leadership Dare and the Faith Dare in the last two weeks. This week we examine the Accountability Dare. God held Israel accountable for violating His command regarding the spoils of war in the defeat of the fortified city of Jericho. The background of the lesson was the defeat of the Israelites by an insignificant band of warriors from Ai. How could the Israelites defeat the fortified city of Jericho and then lose to a small militia from Ai? The theological answer was that God gave the Israelites the victory over Jericho but allowed the men of Ai to defeat them. The lesson encourages all of us to accept responsibility for our sins and to seek God's remedy.

The key to understanding this week's lesson is to understand the Hebrew concept of *cherem* [pronounced *Care-em*], rendered as "the accursed thing" in the KJV, as "the things under the ban" in the NASB, and as "the devoted things" in the NIV. God had commanded the Israelites to destroy everything in Jericho, with only the silver, gold, and vessels of brass and iron, to be put into the Lord's treasury (Josh. 6:17-21).

1. Understand Sin is Serious (Josh. 7:1,5) According to Joshua 7:1, a man named Achan violated God's command and took items that were banned under *cherem*. He took "a beautiful robe

from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels" (Josh. 7:21; NIV). The Babylonian robe should have been burnt and the silver and gold should have been placed in the Lord's treasury. Instead, Achan coveted these things for himself, disobeying

the Lord by keeping the robe and stealing from the Lord by keeping the silver and gold. Because Achan brought sin into the Israelite camp, God allowed them to be defeated by the inferior force of Ai (7:5). This episode underscores the seriousness of sin. Achan's greed has its parallel in the story of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5:1-11.

2. Realize We Need to Turn to God (Josh. 7:6-8) Joshua and the elders of Israel turned to God for answers. Unaware of Achan's treachery, the faithful leader besought the Lord's guidance to understand why Israel suffered defeat. The placing of "dust upon their heads" indicated

deep seated contrition and humility (7:6). Joshua's initial feelings of inadequacy, recounted in Joshua 1, resurfaced as Joshua struggled to understand the defeat.

3. Admit We Must Deal With Sin (Josh. 7:10-13) The Lord informed Joshua Israel had violated the covenant.

Israel was a collectivistic society. Sin brought into the camp by one person ill-affected all people in the group. Thus Achan's duplicity was

equated with Israel having sinned (7:11). The *cherem* represented things devoted to destruction. Since Achan brought *cherem* into the Israelite camp, their camp shared in the destruction proposed for the *cherem*. Israel could not enjoy victory over her enemies until the *cherem* was removed from the camp and destroyed.

4. Know Sin's Remedy is Costly (Josh. 7:14-15) God instructed Joshua to make all Israel appear before the Lord. The Lord would indicate the offending tribe, clan, family, and person. Joshua

and the people complied. Joshua and all Israel obeyed the Lord. What must Achan have been thinking as the focus constantly narrowed to his tribe, his clan, his family, and finally to him? Ultimately, Achan's sin resulted in his untimely death. All of us should remember the biblical admonitions, "The one who sins is the one who will die" (Ezek. 18:4b; NIV) and "the wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23a; NIV).

What about us? Do we as Christians understand the seriousness of sin in our lives? All sins are offensive to God and result in destructive consequences in our lives. Yet, when we become burdened by our sins, we can humble ourselves before the Lord and receive His help and forgiveness (Heb. 4:16). If we want to enjoy a restored fellowship with Jesus, we must deal with our sins. Any attempt to hide our sins or to ignore them will result in broken fellowship with the Lord. Sin always has carried a high cost. As Christians we should acknowledge Jesus' atoning death as the ultimate cost for our sin. Reflection on the high price Jesus paid will lead us to admit our sins to the Lord, seeking His help in overcoming our shortcomings. By entrusting our daily lives to Jesus, we can pass the Accountability Dare.

VanHorn is dean of Christian Studies at Mississippi College, Clinton.

How Do You Treat God? • Malachi 2:17-3:12

As we continue our study of Malachi, God continues to reveal the gaping holes in their holiness...and ours. This great big, tiny little book perfectly nails us with this truth: the mess man has made is a man-made mess. The Lord of Hosts has argued that the father is worthy of honor, the master is deserving of respect and the governor is due compliance. Concerning earthly citizenship, children, slaves and citizens met minimal requirements of personal responsibility. Regarding heavenly citizenship, the people of God had gravely abdicated their spiritual responsibility. They should have been the model, not the mockery, of obedience. The One Who was most worthy was valued least.

Here is my personal outline of the book of Malachi:

1:2-5 God says: "I love you, period."
1:6-2:9 God says: "There are big holes in your holiness."

2:10-16 God says: "Beware of 'ex's' and idols and other-faith spouses."

2:17-3:6 God says: "I never change, but you need to turn around."

3:7-12 God says: "Let's do a checkbook check-up."

3:13-4:3 God says: "Want to know how your book ends?"

4:4-6 God says: "Meet Moses and Elijah, the laws that prophet."

In Malachi 2:17, God continues to pound them with questions and provide them with answers. When a culture equates good with evil and evil with good, God is never pleased. Whether we choose to do what we know is wrong or refuse to do what we know is right, sin is sin and all of it stinks. Walking through life oblivious to our own unconfessed sins rebuilds the wall which originally separated us from Holy God. These people wanted a judge to come and fix all those "other" people. Oh, the Judge is coming alright. If you want to hear a pleasing verdict, turn around now!

In chapter three, God begins to bridge the divide between Malachi, the final prophet in the Old Testament and John the Baptist, the final prophet/forerunner of the Messiah. This present messenger (Malachi) would be followed by God's next messenger (John the Baptist) who would herald the coming of the one and only Messenger of the Covenant (Jesus!). We will

add the side rails to this bridge in the final chapter of Malachi.

Jesus will come first as sacrifice and return finally to rule as judge of those who reject Him. Malachi's list includes those who practice sorcery, scoff at adultery, swear falsely and oppress the worker, the widow and the orphan. When those un-saints

come marching in, you certainly don't want to be in that number. The Lord desires to perfect His people. He will sit as a refiner over the fires of purification. He will cleanse them with the most efficient laundering process. The proof that the Lord does NOT change is that any of these people had survived without being consumed in His wrath to that present hour. Way back to their earliest ancestors, they had rarely lived in obedience. They had even forgotten how to REPENT!!!

Possibly the most famous passage in the book of Malachi occurs here in chapter three. God asks, "Will a man rob God?" The people are shocked once again to hear

this accusation. The Lord declares that folks who withhold the tithe and offerings are stealing from God. The tenth is the minimum requirement gift for the worshiper to bring into the storehouse. Offerings are given over and above the tithe for special occasions and to provide special needs as a ministry to the less fortunate. Tithes and offerings were and continue to be God's way of providing for the needs of His ministers and His ministry.

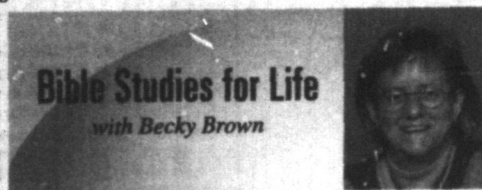
God is God all by Himself. He is complete and needs nothing. All that we are and all that we have belongs to Him. He owns the ten percent AND the remaining ninety percent. We do not give to Him in order to earn anything for ourselves. Even when we give our very best, God is not the emcee for The Price is Right declaring: "A-NEW-CAAAR!" The blessing of giving comes with the giving. When we give ourselves first to God, the rest of the giving comes from the overflow of joy in our lives. The heart that loves God is connected to hands that willingly give to and serve God. Personal responsibility melts into the privilege of grateful service in the lives of those who give themselves. We are to hold loosely everything except obedience.

Brown is the staff evangelist at First Church, Richland.



Explore the Bible

with W. Wayne VanHorn



Bible Studies for Life

with Becky Brown

College News

► Tommy King, president of William Carey University, served as guest speaker at the International Mission Board (IMB) chapel service in Richmond, Va., on March 14. During the service, King presented Tom Elliff,

president of IMB, a miniature replica of the "Carey Turns to the World" statue. WCU dedicated the 600-pound bronze statue of the institution's namesake, William Carey, in November 2011 as part of the yearlong celebration

of Carey's 250th birthday. Elliff spoke at the dedication ceremony as well as the chapel service that followed.

► William Carey University Athletic Director Steve Knight

has announced that Head Women's Golf Coach Jeff Mixon will take over the men's golf program for the Crusaders. He will replace DJ Pulley who is stepping down after a successful six year run in charge of Crusader golf. Mixon,

who is entering his third season in charge of WCU women's golf, has spent over 10 years in the golf business serving as an assistant professional at several courses in the south. Mixon also played professionally for four years.

Sahel famine creates struggle for survival

Regional famine expected to worsen as millions suffer

DAKAR, Senegal (BP and local reports) — The food crisis in Africa's Sahel region is expected to remain critical throughout the summer, an international relief official announced recently.

United Nations aid chief Valerie Amos met with the presidents of Senegal and Burkina Faso during a four-day trip to West Africa to assess the scope and impact of the emergency.

"The humanitarian situation is expected to remain critical at least until the main harvest this autumn," around September, Amos said, according to AFP news service. "We can do more to avoid the crisis from becoming a catastrophe in the region but to save more lives we need strong leadership... and continued generosity from the regional and humanitarian community."

Southern Baptists are being asked to pray for those who are suffering near-starvation and for the workers struggling to help them. They are also being asked to give to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund.

Some 800,000 people in northern Senegal are going hungry, while 2.8 million in the country of Burkina Faso need urgent help, Amos told AFP on May 24.

Burkina Faso also has 60,000 refugees from neighboring Mali living in refugee camps. An estimated 18 million people are suffering from food shortages, and nearly 1.5 million children are near starvation, according to UN figures.

Southern Baptists have responded with an initiative in Mali that will provide a six-month ration of grain and peanuts to help two villages with a combined population of about 3,000. In coordination with local leaders, three distributions will be conducted in each village over the course of four to six months.

The project is being funded with a \$366,200 disbursement from the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund. Donations to the Southern Baptist World Hunger Fund can be made at www.worldhungerfund.com.

Hunger is a chronic problem in the Sahel, said Mark Hatfield, who directs work in Sub-Saharan Africa for Baptist Global Response (BGR) with his wife, Susan.

According to the group's web site, "Baptist Global Response is not an official entity of the Southern Baptist Convention, but it does seek to work with all Southern Baptists to better respond to acute and chronic needs and to coordinate worldwide relief and development efforts."

Hatfield said, "In 2011, the rains came late or not at all over much of the region, and harvests have been very limited."

One country estimates agricultural production may be down as much as 75%. Families are running out of food quickly, food prices are skyrocketing, and malnutrition is reaching

emergency levels, especially among infants and children."

The only hope many people in the Sahel have is that people who care will respond to their need, said Jeff Palmer, BGR's executive director.

"The most important thing Christians can do is to pray that God would miraculously provide the resources needed to avert a complete disaster," Palmer said. "This crisis is massive and the international community has not yet risen to meet all the need. Our own resources through the World Hunger Fund are limited. Families in a dozen countries

are desperate to know that we care about their plight."

The Sahel is a 3,400 mile expanse that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean to the Red Sea, between the Sahara desert to the north and the savanna to the south. Its name derives from an Arabic word that means "shore." The Sahel appears to run as a coastline along the southern edge of the Sahara's ocean of sand.

The Sahel covers parts of the African nations of Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, South Sudan, Cameroon, and Eritrea.

PRECIOUS SUPPLIES — The arrival of semi-trailer loads of food brought great relief to residents of two villages in Africa's Sahel region, where an estimated 18 million people are suffering from food shortages. Southern Baptists have responded by providing the villages with a six-month ration of grain and peanuts. (BP photo courtesy of Baptist Global Response)



First Person: Southern Baptist food fills stomachs, brings joy

Editor's note: The following note was written by a Baptist Global Response partner after the first distribution of food to two villages in Mali suffering in the Sahel food crisis. The name has been withheld for security reasons.

DAKAR, Senegal (BP) — It's going to be difficult to put into words the experience we had distributing food to these villages. I should begin by saying thank you to all of you have given to the World Hunger Fund. We brought six truckloads of grain to two different villages.

Upon our arrival at the first village, nearly all the residents came to the road to welcome us. We were greeted with traditional musicians and singers, then treated to dancing — something I've not seen amongst this people group.

It was a festive air, filled with the anticipation of the arrival of much-needed grain. The first truck had arrived, and three days later the second arrived. In the interval, our team had the opportunity to share stories and participate in village activities, such as a baby-naming ceremony.

Through this gift of love and our relational approach to the people, the residents of these villages now have a better understanding of God's love. After we had distributed the grain, we met with the village elders, who repeatedly thanked us for the food. They told us it arrived just in time.

After the second day of distribution, I was in the "shower" taking a bucket bath under the stars after yet another 120+ degree day. In the distance, I heard a woman let out this traditional whoop of joy. I heard banging, like on a drum.

After supper that night, our host asked if I had heard the woman. I said yes, and he went on to tell me a bit of her story.

She was divorced with four children. Her husband had left her. Because she had no man to advocate for her to be on the recipient list for the grain we were distributing, she knew she and her children would be left out. When she got home from her work, however, she found enough grain for a family of five sitting in her court yard. It was then she let out the whoop I had heard earlier, and she began to beat a five-gallon water jug as a makeshift drum.

She told her neighbors she was going to beat the drum all night because she now had food to feed her children!

The second village that received the grain was about three times larger than the first. Two semi trucks arrived shortly after we did, and we inventoried the contents as they unloaded. We then got to wait another two days for the other two trucks to arrive.

As those trucks were unloaded, the village treated us to traditional drumming and dancing in thanks for the food. They couldn't believe we would really bring such a gift. Our team and two volunteers from a sister organization measured out bowls of

corn and peanuts to be sure the food was equally distributed — hot and dusty work.

Our last night in the village, we were called to the public square for more dancing and drumming. It was a very special night. We got back to our hosts' home at about 11:30 pm, all of us quite tired and ready for bed.

Just 10 minutes later, though, the traditional singers and drummers came into the yard. They had followed us back to dance and sing more for us! Never mind some of us were already in bed! The song they sang, though, was the sweetest: "Who brought us corn? Who brought us peanuts? Who brought us millet? Jesus did!"

During the past two weeks, I have received many thanks and blessings from the recipients of the grain. Our prayer from the beginning has been that this food would be seen given by Jesus and not simply the Americans.

Villagers came to us and said, "We thought you'd forgotten about us. We were told you went back to America and didn't care." We explained that we had to leave for a little while but we were back for now. Others came to us and said, "You just don't understand, the food came just in time."

Each time our team got to respond with a story and words of love.

Many of these families had little or no food left at all in their homes. The neighbors of our teammates had had no food at all in their home that week.

One teammate returned to his village and noticed there were very few folks out and about to talk with. He asked where everyone was and was told "Oh, they're at home sleeping. We finally have food in our stomachs, and we can sleep now." Before, the majority of the village was too hungry to sleep through the night.

It's been a humbling two weeks for me. Sure, it was 12 days of 120-128 degree weather — with a few rains and sand storms tossed in to keep things interesting — and some interesting food (tastes like chicken!).

All of our team can testify to the Lord's provision and strength through it all. We got to share about God's love, and because of your generosity, softer hearts will reflect on things tonight as they eat supper.

We hope to do at least one more distribution to these villages before the harvest comes in. Please ask the Lord to send timely and abundant rains to these villages on the fringe of the Sahara desert.

Also, ask the Lord to answer the cries of the many, many villages that did not receive this blessing. Many will be hungry tonight in Mali, Niger, Mauritania, and Burkina Faso.

Thank you for giving. It was a profound blessing to our team during this time of chaos in Mali where the only thing certain is hunger. I just wish we could do more.

Only God can repay you (Malian proverb/blessing).